

It is worth noting that current U.S. defense spending is at one of its lowest levels since before Pearl Harbor.

I urgently request that President Bush prepare a ballistic missile defense budget that will enable the United States to exploit its technology in high-energy lasers and hit-to-kill interceptors. Much of this technology should be deployed in orbit where it can provide global coverage, multiple opportunities for interception, and a boost phase interception capability.

TRIBUTE TO THE DOMINICAN AMERICAN NATIONAL ROUNDTABLE

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2001

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, Representatives of the community with a common heritage from the Dominican Republic gathered December 7-9, 2001 for the fourth annual conference of the Dominican American National Roundtable. Each year, this group comes together to reflect on the past year, discuss areas of need within the community, and plan for the upcoming year. This year's conference was especially meaningful in light of the recent tragedies affecting the Dominican American community and I extend my most sincere congratulations to the DANR and its president Adriano Espaillat for hosting such a successful weekend here in Washington DC.

Already struggling to overcome the devastating effects of September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the crash of American Airlines Flight #587 has impacted our Nation's Dominican community deeply. Almost all 260 persons aboard the flight were of Dominican ancestry and, as was pointedly demonstrated during the conference, it seems as if every person of Dominican heritage in the United States has been personally touched by this tragedy. During the opening session Moises Perez, Executive Director of Alianza Dominicana a social service community based non-profit agency located in northern Manhattan illustrated this with this with a story of personal quest to find one person who did not know someone aboard the plane. He has yet to find one person.

Our ability to gather and reflect on these recent occurrences was essential in providing a discourse for this community to begin to make sense of these horrific events. It also provided a forum to discuss the next forward step. As the Dominican community continues to mourn the loss of so many loved ones, we must support its efforts to continue its work to address the items that impact the community.

This year's conference celebrated the opening of the DANR's Washington DC office. The DANR seeks to bring the voices of all people of Dominican origin who lived in the United States together and provide a forum for analysis, planning, and action to advance the primary interests of the community. The office will serve as the coordinating center for the Dominican American's agenda, ensuring that their voice is heard at the national level and

their interests are being addressed in the legislative arena. Representing the largest Dominican community in the United States, I am strongly supportive of the opening of this office and I pledge my support to this community as it continues to grow in strength and size in the United States.

This year's theme, "Empowerment through Education" demonstrates the importance of education to the future of this community. Like many Americans, education is high on the list of critical priorities for the Dominican American community. However, the Dominican American population is plagued by sky rocketing drop out rates, poorly funded and dilapidated schools, educators ill-prepared to face the challenges of migratory communities and bilingual education, and a lack from or familiar with the community.

I commend the DANR's commitment to its youth. In addition to the participation of so many key leaders within the community, the presence of a large number of young people was particularly heart-warming and telling of the potential success this community will find if it is given the opportunity to participate in the framing and addressing of the issues and challenges which face it. From high school to graduate school, these students represented the future leaders of the Dominican American community and their dedication to their roots in the Dominican Republic and United States is evident. Too often our children are forced to shed and hide the heritage that defines them. Our culture is not a curse; it is a blessing, and we must never let our youth forget that where we come from is essential in determining who we will become.

I would like to thank all those whose hard work made the weekend possible, especially the DANR President Adriano Espaillat. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the DANR Board of Directors including Alejandra Castillo, Raysa Castillo, Miguel De Jesus, Ana Garcia, Epifanio Gil, Josefina Infante, Rafael Latinga, Mania Luna, Manuel Matos, Rafael Morel, Barbara Perez, Moises Perez, Felipe Rodriguez, Ydanis Rodriguez, Elvis Ruiz, Luis Salcedo and Slivio Torres-Saillant and the DANR staff consisting of Jose Bello, Rademes Peguero, Victor F. Capellan, Ninoska Uribe, Roberto Alvarez, and Margarita Cepeda.

I look forward to continuing our work to supporting and advancing the Dominican American community.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO SOUTHEAST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2001

Mr. ROGERS of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Southeast Elementary School for earning the Golden Apple Award for educational excellence.

The annual Golden Apple Award is awarded by Governor John Engler for improved scores in the 4th and 5th grades on the Michigan Education Assessment Program, which test the sections of math, science, reading, and writing. Schools must attain a 60-point in-

crease over three year period to receive the honor.

Last year 54 percent of the students successfully passed the reading portion of the MEAP test compared to 77.3 this year. Also, 74 percent of the students passed the math portion last year compared to 90.7 this year.

The advances by Southeast Elementary School were a result of aggressively employing strategies to help students who placed in the bottom 20-30 percent for the MEAP. Southeast employed dozens of teachers, tutors, and volunteers in a 6-8 week program last winter. The program students focused on reading, writing, math, and science on a daily basis. Further, the school utilized a full-time literacy leader to concentrate on English skills and an educator to concentrate in math. Both programs centered on working with small groups or individuals to help the students improve in the areas in which they were lacking in.

Therefore Mr. Speaker, I respectfully ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Southeast Elementary School for earning the Golden Apple Award. I salute their commitment to teaching our nations future leaders and commend each educators commitment to teaching these important skills.

TRIBUTE TO THE HOUSE OFFICE OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

HON. ROBERT W. NEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 18, 2001

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that the House Office of Employee Assistance has been recognized with the EAP Digest/Employee Assistance Professionals Association Quality Award for EAP Excellence for 2001.

The House of Representatives, for the last fourteen years, has been privileged to have a high-performing team in its Office of Employee Assistance. Those of us who have worked with these individuals have often experienced their high level of service and passion for their work. Now, the entire nation will know too, as the House Office of Employee Assistance has been recognized with the EAP Digest/Employee Assistance Professionals Association Quality Award for EAP Excellence for 2001.

The award states, "Evaluation and quality improvement has always been a key component of the U.S. House of Representatives program. Whether through client satisfaction surveys, peer reviews or more innovative techniques such as customer interviews and the system-wide evaluation, all modes of evaluation came to the same finding: The Office of Employee Assistance demonstrates exemplary continuous improvement efforts that enhanced the quality of EAP services."

The House team of Bern Beidel, Liz McBride, Debbie Frank, Kristin Welsh-Simpson, and Patty Prince should feel quite proud of its accomplishments and for this recognition that is well deserved.

It's also appropriate to pay tribute to a number of former House Members and employees who laid the groundwork for this program.